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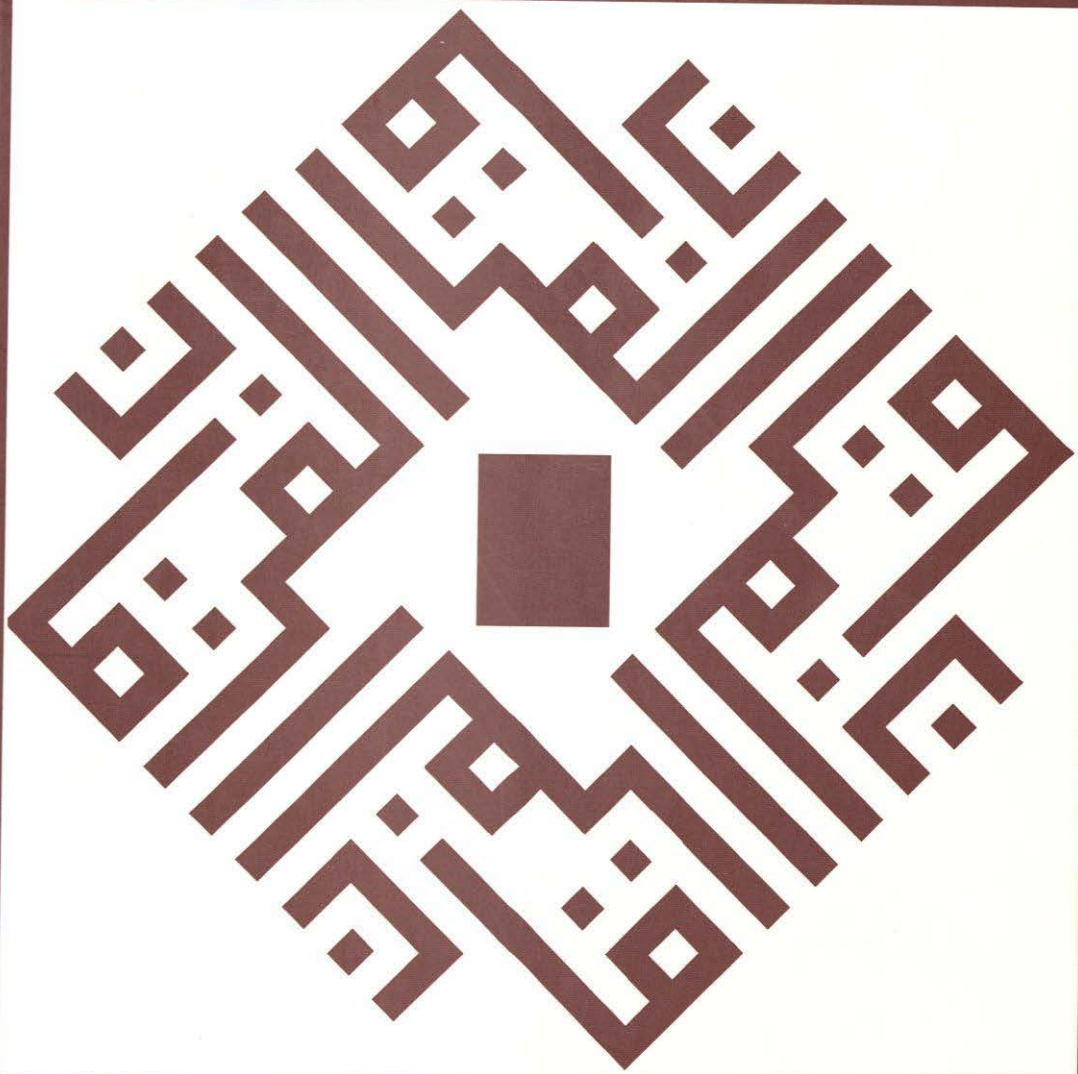
THE CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION OF ISLAMIC MANUSCRIPTS



PROCEEDINGS OF
THE THIRD CONFERENCE OF
AL-FURQĀN ISLAMIC HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

FOREWORD

Since it was launched in 1991 (1412 AH) to serve and preserve Islamic manuscripts, Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation has had an integrated vision of the field of work to which it is devoted. It has had a clear vision of its specific goals within that field, and the means by which to achieve those goals.

The first of the Foundation's vital lines of activity was its survey of collections of Islamic manuscripts worldwide, including a general description of each collection and the conditions in which it is kept. This was followed by initiatives to catalogue collections in remote and previously unknown libraries, and to enable cataloguers to make the most of their skills by providing them with essential training and resources.

There is no doubt that these integrated initiatives are important, attempting as they do to give an overview of the heritage, while at the same time being of service to it. However, they are to some extent extrinsic as they do not touch on problems concerned with the Islamic manuscript itself.

We, therefore, turned our attention toward activities which would deal with the manuscript as such. The Foundation now holds a regular, bi-annual conference on a theme connected with the Islamic manuscript, given that this is a repository of knowledge which has been handed down to us after long years of neglect. Scholarship in this area suffers from a depletion of traditional skills which once preserved manuscripts over the years. But there is now a general realisation that this resource deserves our protection, not only because of the value of its intellectual content (for that can easily be saved by microfilming) but also for its status as a work of art expressive of a great civilisation. It also exemplifies the creative intermingling of a number of cultural currents.

The Islamic manuscript embodies important technical achievements in the art of the book: the various schools of binding and the different uses of parchment and paper, of which